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THE DEFENSE OF THIRD WORLD NATIONS: THE CASE OF ZAIRE
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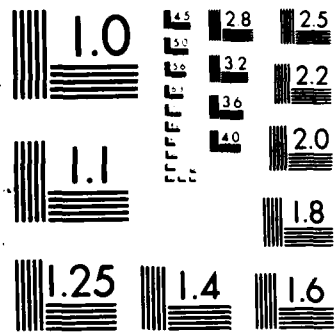
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THE DEFENSE OF THIRD WORLD NATIONS:
THE CASE OF ZAIRE

BY

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An Individual Essay

by

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THE DEFENSE OF THIRD WORLD NATION: THE CASE OF ZAIRE

INTRODUCTION

Proclamations of independence in some new states and new prominence of the Third World are among the most portentous events of the mid twentieth century. The resulting problems of political and economic development have for some years been the subject of much delays in the path to progress.

This essay is designed to examine and compare these states, first of all under colonial rules and secondarily as free states mainly for their transitions, organizational structure and development for their armed forces.

The case of the Zairian armed forces is treated more deeply in this essay. The magnitude and intensity of the role they played is due to the leadership of Marshal Mobutu as Commander-in-Chief, for the cause of the country and people in regard to national defense policies, security systems and integration; even though the country's attainment of independence was entirely made at the end of colonial rule distinguished by heavy paternalism and lack of any preparation for nationhood.

Regardless of the fact that this army is not yet uniformly as good as it can and must be, today's army is better than it was 20 years ago.

The cooperation in the specific field of training and logistical support from friendly armies was so important that it is mentioned in the following pages, because we feel that this help cannot be unrecognized or unappreciated by all individuals interested in the development of the Zairian armed forces.

Through this essay my desire is to share information with those concerned about the history of development of less industrialized countries and their defense policies in the present time and in the future.

THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF THIRD WORLD ARMIES

Introduction

In the great majority of third world countries, especially in those of African origin before colonial occupation, the internal structures of political authority were predominantly based on many distinct horizons bounded by family, lineage group, ethnicity, language and religion. For those reasons most Sub-Saharan African countries have been organized into tribes. In the mind of Africans for many years the English word "Nation" is defined objectively as a community which manifests cultural uniformity, spiritual union, institutional unity, and material unification to the highest possible degree and subjectively as one with which the members consciously identify themselves has been applied to some countries as the equivalent of a group commonly called "tribes."

The defense system before the occupation by Europeans

For all countries who were organized under the system described above before the penetration of western countries, the policy of homeland defense was a fundamental issue of contention since the foundation of the tribe as nation.

People of any traditional historical period except modern times understood that all tribes had a sacred duty to protect themselves. A part of self-defense obligation is that if one comes to kill you, you must make haste and kill him first. Each tribe was aware of this right and that aggression must be forcefully resisted. The tribe's chief had the responsibility to assume the solid existence of his tribe by a defense policy system of an ancestral homeland and the chief often was the embodiment of the tribe; so the

defense policy has been a tradition that provided some organics involved in the process of execution in order to face some bitter conflicts between tribes over issues of profound concern to them. For instance, sometimes one tribe attempted to interrupt another one's autonomy by repelling occupants in order to gain more land or by any other conflict which erupted into violence that may prejudice the rights of an existing community.

Due to the defense policies many people died in the overall Third World, especially by presenting resistance to the European's penetration and before that they had been killed in defense against the slave trade while raiders attempted to wipe out entire villages.

Transition

Those ideas were a common concern for all countries and by illustrating my subject with this introduction, I want to make it clear that the defense policies in the Third World existed before the penetration of European countries, even though the principles, means, organizations were different from colonial policies. It is however true that the purpose was the same through the centuries up to the modern era.

THE ZAIRE COLONIAL DEFENSE POLICY

Occupation

The establishment of King Leopold of Belgium's control over the Congo Free state, as the territory was to be called, is an interesting story. In 1876, Leopold called a meeting of experts on Africa; he wanted the support of other European nations in exploring and investigating the riches of the continent. A conference was called at Berlin in 1884-1885 to iron out this problem. The members marked out spheres of influence in Africa and set boundaries of countries that exist to this day.

Leopold claimed the Congo country and from 1885 to 1908 the Congo Free state was ruled or rather misruled by Leopold. In 1908, because of his merciless and inhuman treatment of the natives, he was forced to sell this territory to Belgium and it was renamed Belgian Congo

Definition of the Army of Settlement

By and large there is no way to develop a Zairian defense system without mentioning the colonial army of settlement called "Force Publique" which was created in 1888 in the sinister period of Leopold II's personal rule. For most of the colonial period the "Force Publique" was apparently both a defense force (with pacification commitments) and a gendarmerie. But the basic mission of the colonial army was to help and reinforce settlement in the country and to keep the peace.

The colony was first of all a great source of manpower which could be mobilized in case of war against the metropole (in World War I units of the "Force Publique" served in the Cameroon and the German East Africa campaign. It was also used in World War II.) The possession of colonies gave greater strategic mobility to world powers.

The "Force Publique" was conscious of the need to defend the capital investments made by the metropole's own nationals and the protection of any mineral rights which had so far not been exploited.

"Force Publique Posture"

For good reasons, there had been a growing concern among the Belgian policy and opinion makers about the future of the colony. Efforts were made to isolate the natives from higher education or from all ideas related to the independence of their country in such a way that the colonial system remain

longer. The consequences were that at independence, contrary to the French and British system, the "Force Publique" had no Zairian officers.

The great majority of the army was composed of well disciplined soldiers, with no skill and low level of education. The best high school educated young men, and there were very few, could join the Force Publique for a maximum period of 18 months before being sent back to civilian life. We feel it is important to mention the fact that after WW II all the NCOs who took part in the war outside the colony were demobilized for the simple reason that they could not live together with those who didn't have any experience from other armies. Regardless of the fact that they had some qualifications, they were sent to the villages in order to avoid all mix ups.

INDEPENDENCE AND AFRICANIZATION OF THE ARMIES

When nearing the reality of independence in the 1950's some colonial powers were concerned about the taking over of the responsibilities of the armies and the private sectors by the Africans themselves. Therefore when the countries, especially those under French and British rule achieved freedom, the colonial armies had some native officers so that most states inherited the colonial forces which until then had formed the nucleus of their national armies. In a contrast between many colonies and Zaire under Belgium, the tendencies of native to be integrated into the government or army systems were without any doubt considered by the colonial authorities as illusions. Generally speaking the Belgians expected to run the colony for 30 years more, beginning in 1960. But when that even brought immediate change the same year, Zaire had a complete lack of any African officers in a force totaling, in July 1960, more than 24,000 men.

This unresponsive attitude of preparing an officer cadre resulted immediately after independence in an occasion to provoke a mutiny. President Mobutu, first as Chief of Staff and later as Commander in Chief, quickly gained a reputation for ability and driving energy in creating a small nucleus of capable and disciplined soldiers around him. In this manner he brought back the army to the road of discipline.

In 1960 the prospects for survival of Zaire as an entity did not seem great, because at this time President Mobutu, as Commander in Chief, was planning to create a national army by bringing back the corps which had been fragmented into three major sections because of a secession created by politicians who were disputing over power. There were no strong structures in order to define clearly military strategy, and the creation of a national army required a wide variety of contributing factors for the nation:

- o Colonial army's heritage.
- o Economic and financial stability.
- o A regime's acceptance by the people it claims to govern.
- o Its relations with the great powers and the role it assigns to the armed forces.

National reconciliation took place with all the political leaders after President Mobutu, with the soldiers under his command, eliminated the opposing forces and reabsorbed the so-called secessionist armies of Kisangani, Katanga and South Kasai. From then on, with only one headquarters located in Kinshasa, the capital city, care has been taken seriously by the new state in its defense policies; therefore the question was how to get well trained officers, NCO's, and recruits of young soldiers.

The acquisition of the equipment was one of the most important problems.

For the best understanding of Zaire national defense policy, we must take into account the armed forces missions with all implications from the size of the country and military aspects to geographical environment.

GEOGRAPHY

Zaire is the third largest country in Africa and lies astride the equator in the heart of the continent. Only Sudan and Algeria are larger. The extremely long boundaries of 9,902 kilometers result in Zaire sharing borders with nine countries. In a clockwise direction Zaire's neighbors are Congo, Central Africa, the Sudan, Uganda, Ruanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia and Angola. Each country has its own political system and allies from the right as well as from the left.

The strongest threat to Zaire comes from neighboring pro-Soviet countries. Some have already served as jumping-off points for many subversive actions; they welcome Zairian insurgents and provide training facilities in order to destabilize Zaire's regime. A few years ago, Zaire faced several attacks by Cuban-trained rebels (sometimes backed-up by Cubans themselves) operating out of Angola.

The country's only outlet to the Atlantic Ocean is a narrow strip of land on the north bank of the Zaire estuary, along the South Atlantic Coast; the geographical area of Zaire is about 905,063 square miles and the total population about 32.6 million. The lines of communication cut by numerous rivers in most parts of the country constitute a real handicap for any military movement by land from one province to another. There are three distinctive features of this land mass: the immense river basin of the Zaire and its tributaries which is tropically hot and humid; the rich mining areas located in the eastern sector; and the upland plains in the northeast and

southeast with tall mountains rising to almost 17.000 feet. The three largest cities are Kinshasa, the capital city in the west, Lubumbashi in the south, and Kisangani in the northern part; those three locations constitute also the military region headquarters with one third of the country as an area of responsibility at the operational level. Therefore the concern of the Zairian armed forces is enlaying the needed organizational structure with sufficient resources and the human potential necessary in order to face with success any threat.

The magnitude and intensity of the role of the Zairian army is defined for the greater part not by authoritarian personnel aspirations or ambitions but by the enormity of the country; and the role it must play not only as a big Central Africa country but also because it has consistently maintained its strong pro-U.S. and pro-western ties. As a dependable western ally, Zaire is very important and needs to increase the readiness and mobility of its armed forces to defend its extensive borders.

ZAIRIAN ARMED FORCES MISSIONS AND DOCTRINE

Missions

The missions are:

- o To defend the integrity of national territory.
- o To secure and protect all citizens and property.
- o To keep peace in all the country.

The operational doctrine of execution consists of:

- o The doctrine of a total people's war that means all Zairian citizens are unified by the Popular Movement of Revolution (the only political party according to the constitution in the country) behind the armed forces, directed against outside invasion, aggression or attacks.

o The doctrine of domestic peace and security directed against internal disturbances, uprisings and rebellions created by their own people as well as those activated and instigated from outside. It goes without saying that those tasks must be based on and have its source in the people.

oo It must be organized in depth.

oo It must have a logical, clear, functional, and structural relationship with all existing elements.

oo It must integrate all national defense and security forces.

o The success is based on the fact that people are guided by the main idea of performing on the basis of:

oo one political entity;

oo one territorial unity;

oo one defense and security entity.

Organizational Structure

Supreme Commander

DOD

JCS

Chiefs of Staff

Army

Air Force

Gendarmerie

Navy

The President of Zaire is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He is assisted at the level of the Department of Defense by a secretary of

defense in charge of advising the President at the cabinet level on the domestic defense system and security policy. The joint chief of staff is directly responsible to the supreme commander for leading the armed forces to the completion, without failures of the assignment mission in order to meet military objectives.

Four chiefs of staff for the forces are direct subordinates to the joint chief of staff. Each of them is in charge of:

- o Army.
- o Air force.
- o Navy.
- o Gendarmerie.

Every chief of staff has the responsibility of handling his force and bringing it to a successful outcome.

They are selected on the precise basis of being specialists of the force. A flag officer getting ready to take command is a sine qua non condition.

The force is divided into military regions as far as the ground forces go the country has three military regions in charge of tactics and operational units. The other forces each have a similar structure; but the areas of responsibility across the country are valuable numerically because each force has its main duty in a specific field.

EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES

As mentioned above in the historical background, there was little effort made prior to independence to prepare the black people of Zaire for self-rule, although the Belgians did establish primary and secondary schools which would have eventually served as a basis for higher education. These opened in the late 1950's. But the graduates with high school diplomas were very limited in

the army, because the policy of colonists in the field of the recruitment gave strict priority to less-educated men in excellent physical condition. In conclusion, in 1960, most of the troops inherited from the colonial army were uneducated and poorly trained, and inadequately equipped with inferior weapons.

All high school graduates were obliged in the colonial era to leave the army after 18 months of service; therefore, there was no effective officer training system.

After receiving his mission to create and update the national army according to the needs of the new state, the Chief of Staff at the time, President Mobutu, had some key considerations in terms of the time necessary for training, resources available and the fact that the political situation could at any time require the employment of armed forces for the neutralization or destruction of any enemy's armed forces and restoration of the political and territorial integrity. The greatest difficulties were, of course, how to get well-trained officers.

Training

Training was the key to achieve and meet army missions. The Chief of Staff was also aware that the army's success in combat requires continuous study and reflection to foster competence, initiative, creativity, and a sense of purpose demanded of military professionals, particularly those in positions of leadership.

Although the army didn't have any officers at the proclamation of the independence, it is true that among the people in the colonial army there were without any doubt some members with the inherent potential to perform at greater levels of skill and effectiveness. The first duty of the Chief of

Staff was a quick conversion to leadership training; so that after leaders become good trainers, they could take care of their units and soldiers.

Those of us who were there confirm that the choice for leaders were made by appointment from among NCO, on the basis of their intellectual quality and their skills.

But at the root of things the questions were where the Chief of Staff wanted to send them, and what he wanted them to do when they got there in order to be responsive to the urgent needs of the nation. There wasn't any way to conduct training at home for officers conversion at that time; to solve this complex equation this training had to be done in conjunction with some friendly countries.

For this purpose, the United States and Belgium sent a team to Zaire under Colonel Michael Greene of the U.S. Army. The plan made by Colonel Greene in performing his mission called for a series of bilateral military aid programs to help with:

- o Equipment modernization,
- o Officer's training.

To accomplish these the United States lined up four of its NATO allies for the task, they were the United States, Belgium, Italy and Israel, as suppliers of aid to the armed forces of Zaire.

EXECUTION

This training was based on the preparation of a professional army with the priorities in the immediate needs of the country. It was clear that according to the size of the country and its terrain what was needed was:

- o Well-trained infantry men, useful in all types of terrain.

- o Paratroopers and pilots in order to reduce the country's size by the use of aviation.

- o Combat service support elements.

- o Gendarmerie training.

In regard to the example of the British and the French, it appeared that Belgium felt guilty for its policy of no preparation and we can say that Belgian training was by far the most significant; because of the training they conducted abroad for more than 1,000 men (officers and warrant officers) that had a remarkable impact during the years following independence. By mid-1964, 75 Belgian officers, most of them instructors and some others as HQ advisers, had been sent to Zaire, conducting training there in order to reduce expenditures. As a team, Zairian and Belgian officers worked together in the largest training center in Zaire; based in Kitona (in the south of Zaire). This center belonged to the metropole before independence and served during the whole colonial period as a location for the metropole's reserve training. When it was reopened by the Zairian authorities, its large facilities gave them the opportunity to train at the same time separately as many people as were needed at all levels. Belgians and Zairians ran there a training highly appreciated by the individual soldiers, platoon leaders, company commander and battalion commanders. Many combat support branch schools were set up in Kinshasa, the capital city, or Kanangu (former Luluabourg).

Gendarmerie

The gendarmerie training was given the same importance as the infantry training, because in contrast to many African countries, Zaire doesn't have at this time a police force. All missions assigned to the United States Police are assigned in Zaire to the gendarmerie that has its main duties related to domestic laws. Besides this task, if war occurs in the country, the

gendarmerie's units have to take part as well as infantry units; for this reason at all levels of training, the gendarmes have a half time of common trunk line with the infantrymen. This school was transferred from Belgium to Zaire (Kitoma) at the same time with all infantry elements.

The focus of Israel's training was a paratroopers and deployment on the ground, while the Italian aid was concentrated on helping create the Zairian Air Force. The focus for the United States was concentrated at that time on supplying modern equipment and training Zairian users how to operate them; the United States aid must also be mentioned with respect because of this support.

Mention must be made of some other countries' contributions, this is in regard to their willingness to accept many young men from Zaire to attend a normal cycle in their military academies, duplicating by this means quick training, was done by Belgium, France and the U.K.

ZAIRIAN ARMED FORCES POSTURE OF TODAY

As a result of some years of emphasis on defense policy, the army is substantially more capable today than it was in 1960. It has been strengthened and can respond more effectively, and in national aspects, more will be done in the future. The gains in Army capability are evidenced by big progress made in reinforcing the size of the armed forces and by having qualified manpower. Now we can look at how the armed forces of Zaire get their manpower resources.

Initial Entry: Enlistees

As an equal opportunity, all Zairian citizens certified not mentally or physically ill between the age of 16 and 21 can serve in the army if they are volunteers and in possession of at least an elementary school certificate.

Similar training is given to all recruits for a scheduled period of 12 months; regardless of the force under which the soldier may serve after his training. In the philosophy of Zairian leaders, they believe that infantry skills are a common trunk and compulsory for all enlistees before being assigned to the Gendarmerie, Air Force or Navy. The emphasis is put on well disciplined, physically tough, and highly motivated soldiers. During those 12 months they must learn that the armed forces are different from civilian life in the conduct, obedience, and service. The basic skills of tactics, weapons, map readings, physical exercises, the constitution and the political party doctrine constitute the emphasis. In the last phase they are involved in the Zaire defense system performing at the platoon level as a member of a section. This phase is followed by a specialization in the field of each force to which the soldier is assigned.

NCO

All components of the NCO category come from those recruits that have served for at least three years in the armed forces. They often have some level of high school without a graduate diploma.

One of the most important conditions for admission is a commander's report certifying that the candidate has enough ability to attend the NCO school in order to become a section chief. In the Zairian system, the NCOs constitute a very important link between the soldiers and the officers. More attention is paid to their training when they attend staff sergeant school, medical school, admin school, signal school, etc.

The Source of Officer Commission

The source of officer commissions consists of two major schooling systems.

- o The Zairian military academy.
- o Military academies abroad of allied countries.

In both cases the candidates must show their high school, graduate diploma and satisfy the tests provided for the occasion.

National universities constitute a third source, mainly of lawyers, doctors and some others. The percentages show:

- 70 percent of Zairian officers come from the national military academy
- 20 percent from foreign military academies
- 10 percent from national and foreign universities.

The imperative for the quality training has always been the first priority in the army in peacetime; this goal has been accomplished despite substantial economic problems of the country for the support of the costs associated with training at all levels. That challenge is significant because, in contrast to the starting situation, going back at the earlier years of the independence, the armed forces now are proud of having many well-trained leaders who transform the soldiers under their authority and they are preparing them to be ready for the future events.

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY POLICY

A large part of my paper above is devoted to the army's colonial history and its development since the proclamation of the independence. The reason is that for a nation I feel free to say that there are two ways of conducting a defense policy. It means first employing a series of negotiations and secondly if the first fails, the continuation of this policy by means of war. This assertion is true for Third World countries and still true for even more developed ones. This war option requires a very high level of preparedness on

the part of our armed forces, because we should be ready not only to launch the preemptive strike, but also to react to the counteroffensive.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The president is responsible for national security strategy, and is assisted by a superior council of defense that includes all top level officers: The Inspector-General, the Joint Chief of Staff, the Secretary of Defense. The Chiefs of Staff of the forces and the military region commanders with some high ranking civilians in charge of some government agencies. All guidance concerning defense policy comes from this important organ.

Formulation

The character of Zairian defense policy is based on active defense directed towards securing and protecting the national efforts by eliminating all threats, challenges and obstacles.

The main feature of this policy is: Non-aggression and good neighborhood relations. The army preserves and protects a free nation by assuring physical security in order to defend its democracy, and development and allows the country to achieve national ideals and goals.

Zairian defense strategy makers are concerned about building and developing a national defense and security force that is capable of facing and coping with all kind of threats, in all their various forms and manifestations and from whatever direction they may come. This gives a meaning to the creation within Zairian armed forces of:

- o Army
- o Gendarmerie
- o Air Force
- o Navy

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Treaties of friendship and military cooperation link Zaire with some foreign countries for their contribution to use in promoting and establishing this system that we were not able to realize entirely by our own means, in regard to the current stresses in the world and especially African economics.

USA

Zaire has received important aid for many years through the United States military assistance program and under international military education and training programs. The aid from the United States made a great improvement in the modernization of the armed forces, especially in respect to TOE, and also with this aid we are free to decide according to our security objectives how we want to use the aid and are able to buy what we want.

Egypt

Egypt one of the few Arab countries that continues to extend military assistance to Zaire. This cooperation started in 1980 with a pact assuring military cooperation in the field of artillery. Tanks have been significant for the establishment of artillery units where Egypt and some other countries gave sufficient training contributions.

Israel

After renewing diplomatic relations with Israel, Israel took charge of the training for men equivalent to some two divisions. Zaire is one of the few black African countries with political and military ties to Israel. Israel will also train the units of the special division, an equivalence of the 82d airborne division.

China

The People's Republic of China has provided military assistance in the domain of tanks - T62-T59

- warships
- commando training

For repair and maintenance purposes, some teams have been provided in the first two areas: Tanks and ships repairing teams attended Chinese military schools. Sometimes the Chinese government agrees to send representatives with spare parts and duplicate Zairian technicians for some repairs.

The language problem is not at all a barrier for this cooperation but it appears that it takes much longer than it should.

French

French cooperation with Zaire started in 1976 with basically two missions: The repairing of French armored cars and paratrooper brigade training, later on the armor school also participated in this cooperation. Except for the armored school where they created some doubts in our mind concerning the level of the French instructors, they did a high quality job in brigade training and in repairs. The "Troupes des marines" were accused of a lack of skill in the conduct of the school, but by 1984 a skilled team was sent to Zaire to take over this job and then the school was opened to all African French-speaking countries. Increasingly French cooperation is most visible now in Zaire because numerically and physically they brought some important teams for a two-year term.

Belgium

Zaire's closest military links with Belgium had taken place when by bilateral agreement after independence, Belgium admitted into different

schools many Zairians, some from the colonial army for a conversion and some other for new orientation toward the needs of the new national army. In 1964 Belgian officers and warrant officers were brought back to Zaire, together with Zairian instructors to help in the training in the National Training Center of Kitona. They were involved in the school system in the whole country and, when in 1969, by presidential decision, the commanding and general staff and military academy were created, Belgian officers had the entire responsibility for those two important schools. They helped Zairian armed forces to set up one infantry brigade and are in charge of the logistics school.

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY

The principles, methods and forms of preparing for war is the military expression of the Popular Movement of Revolution that is according to the constitution the only single party and it includes all national institutions as well as the armed forces; the guiding principle from which the army takes the sources of its action is summarized in five points:

- o One territorial unity.
- o One political entity.
- o One economic entity.
- o One social and cultural entity based on Zairian authenticity.
- o All defense and security systems integrated.

The national defense and security doctrine consists of two levels: The basic doctrine consists of actions that must be taken by the Army, Air Force, Navy or Gendarmerie to meet the requirement based on the armed forces three missions. The operational doctrine consists of a total people's war directed outside against invasion, aggression or attacks. The doctrine of domestic

peace and security directed against internal disturbances, uprisings and rebellions created by our own people as well as those activated and instigated from outside.

THE FUTURE OF THE NATION AND THE ZAIRIAN ARMED FORCES

The future of Zaire and her people depends for the greatest part on the success of the armed forces. The reason is that all development programs must be secured. There is no doubt that the Armed Forces has a solid foundation to support the defense policy. It is true that economic problems are serious barriers for the armed forces to move forward quickly and reach an optional point in the field of defense policy. Zaire has no defense manufacturing capabilities and relies heavily on imports to meet its defense requirements. Based on the defense of its means, the nation is confident of the armed forces and is optimistic for its future.

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